

## Eduardo's Mercedes

The engine revved and the whole structure of the vehicle began to hum good naturedly like a well tuned guitar.

And then I was back.

My mother sang the notes of a song I no longer remembered the words to, but the simple resonating of the tune flooded my ears like the crashing of the sea on the warm sandy beaches of home. The flimsy screen door slammed shut and my father came out, deep mahogany eyes like the bark of maple trees and holding a newly polished tawny instrument.

I asked him why he polished *Abuelo's* guitar at all when he knew he could never buff out the cigar burn Great Uncle Alberto left or fix the dent when the guitar fell out of the case.

He said, "*Una guitarra* is like an automobile, *hijo*. You must keep her shiny and looking like she came out of the shop *esta mañana*."

His calloused fingers danced across the strings like the murals of angels in the church I imagined played theirs in Heaven. He closed his eyes and drifted a little to the music.

I closed mine too and let myself fall into the quiet symphonies of strings.

When I opened them, the sun glared in my face and when I shielded it with my hand, he seemed to glow brighter, happy that I was no longer lost in my memories.

I slammed the hood of the 1961 Mercedes-Benz 190SL shut, pulled off my oil stained gloves and wiped the dribbling sweat off my wrinkled brow. As I walked past the 1969 280 SE 3.5 Cabriolet, I dragged my fingers across the glossy surface of the side door and suddenly I was opening it for a young woman wearing neon orange bell bottoms and a form fitting emerald tunic

that barely hid her stomach. She flung a tuft of her feathered, crow black hair over her shoulder and flashed a white toothed grin as she flounced towards me.

I sighed.

Angelina Fernández.

When she stepped in front of me, she slyly planted a kiss on my cheek.

I stood there for a minute, having forgotten everything I knew, but then she laughed and slid into the shotgun side and turned up the Beatles' "Here Comes the Sun" in Spanish.

I smiled and listened to the soft strumming of the guitar before flicking on the engine. I pecked a kiss on Angelina's cheek and peeled out of the parking lot, her normally quiet voice whooping in delight as we tore down the road.

"Eduardo?" a soft whisper, barely heard above the breeze asked, feeling far away as if from a dream.

I looked up to see Angelina standing in front of me with a worried expression. Her hair now had streaks of gray and light wrinkles had replaced the laugh lines on her forehead, but one could not say she wasn't still beautiful.

I shook my head and let her take my arm as we strolled back towards the house.

As we walked, I patted the car that had taken my son to the airport after he had told me he wanted to go live in Britain to go to business school.

I brushed my finger across the one that I had fixed myself when I worked in *Rafael's Auto and Repair Co.* in Havana to raise enough money to travel to America with my then wife, Angelina. I smiled a little when I remembered it still had the *ropa vieja* sauce stain on the front seat from one of the times she had visited me on break. I would never wipe it off, even if it wasn't permanently soaked into the camel brown leather.

When we passed the one my father had bought as a going away present before I left for America, I lingered for a minute.

“*La vida te llevará a los rincones más lejanos de la tierra, Eduardo,*” he said in our native tongue and rested his hands on my shoulders.

A single tear slipped out of his eye and my own widened. I had never seen my father cry. My mother stepped up beside him and squeezed his shoulder.

He cleared his throat and continued.

“And life will throw challenges at you, *hijo mío,*” he continued in English. “But you must overcome them. Life is...*una montaña,* Eduardo. Your goal is to find your *camino,* not to reach the top.”

I smiled.

He continued to stubbornly claim to have said it first even after I told him the ice hockey player, Maxime Lagacé, was credited with saying it later.

A tear slipped over my dust stained cheek and I wiped it away.

Angelina seemed to understand and gave me a reassuring smile.

“Maybe we should take a drive, *mi amor?*” she asked and clasped my hand in hers.

I nodded vaguely and turned away from the car to trot back to the opposite end of the driveway.

I opened the door to the Cabriolet and bowed dramatically. Angelina just smiled at me as she slid into the passenger side and turned on the radio.

“Here Comes the Sun” came on and I gently kissed her cheek before backing up the Mercedes and careening down the road.

Angelina glanced at me out of the corner of her eye before raising her hands to the wind and crying out in satisfaction.

I just kept my eyes on the road as I slammed my foot on the accelerator, but as I listened to George Harrison sing of finding happiness, the hint of a smile played at the edges of my lips as we drove into ecstasy.

## **Glossary**

*Abuelo*-grandpa/grandfather

*Una guitarra*-A guitar

*hijo (mío)*-(my) son

*esta mañana*-this morning

*ropa vieja*-a Cuban dish originating from the Canary Islands that “consists of previously boiled and shredded meat, cooked in a sauce with onion, bell peppers, bay leaves, and cumin, among other ingredients” -Yami Cabrera on *chefspencil.com*

*La vida te llevará a los rincones más lejanos de la tierra*, Eduardo-Life will take you to the farthest corners of the earth, Eduardo

*una montaña*-a mountain

*camino*-path

*mi amor*-my love